

JANUARY 22, 1976

SOME AMERICAN VIEWS OF LEBANON

ANNCR:

THE SITUATION IN LEBANON SEEMS TO BE EASING. THE MORE HOPEFUL TURN OF EVENTS CAME WHEN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN FACTIONS JOINED WITH THE PALESTINIANS, SYRIA AND THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IN A MOVE TO END THE TEN-MONTH-OLD CIVIL WAR. (OPT) UNDER A JOINT LEBANESE-SYRIAN PEACE PROPOSAL, AN EQUAL NUMBER OF MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS WOULD SIT IN PARLIAMENT--WHERE CHRISTIANS NOW HAVE A MAJORITY. ALSO GOVERNMENT JOBS WOULD NO LONGER BE BASED ON RELIGION. AND THE PARLIAMENT WOULD CHOOSE THE NATION'S PREMIER INSTEAD OF HAVING HIM SERVE AS A PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEE. (END OPT) THE SITUATION STILL IS GENERATING CONCERNED INTEREST HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, PARTICULARLY AMONG OBSERVERS WHO HAVE LONG SPECIALIZED IN LEBANESE AFFAIRS. VOA'S FRED GALVAN DISCUSSED THAT SITUATION WITH SEVERAL OF THEM.

NARR:

JOHN CAMPBELL OF THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, A WELL-KNOWN WRITER AND LECTURER ON MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS, SAW THE JUST-ANNOUNCED MOVE TO END THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR IN THESE TERMS:

VOICE:

THIS KIND OF FORMULA IS WHAT'S BEEN NEEDED ALL ALONG AND IT'S BEEN WHAT THE CHRISTIANS HAD TO CONCEDE. THERE IS NO CHANCE REALLY OF GOING BACK TO THE OLD SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN LEBANON, WHICH GAVE THE CHRISTIANS A SUPERIOR POSITION--THEY HAD TO GIVE THAT UP.

NARR:

HARRY ELLIS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, JUST BACK FROM BEIRUT, WHERE HE WAS BUREAU CHIEF FOR SEVERAL YEARS, OFFERED THIS BACKGROUND ON THE LEBANESE SITUATION:

VOICE:

THE ROOT OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS GOES BACK TO THE CONSTITUTION WHICH FRANCE BEQUEATHED TO LEBANON WHEN IT GAINED ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM FRANCE (IN 1943). THAT CONSTITUTION GUARANTEED FOR THE CHRISTIAN LEBANESE A DOMINANCE IN THE COUNTRY BEGINNING WITH THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD ALWAYS BE A MARONITE CHRISTIAN. NOW IN THE YEARS SINCE THEN, THE HIGHER MOSLEM BIRTH RATE HAS REVERSED THE SITUATION SO THAT NOW THERE ARE CLEARLY MORE MOSLEMS THAN THERE ARE CHRISTIANS AND THIS IS REALLY AT THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE.

NARR:

IT WAS WITH THIS BACKGROUND IN MIND THAT MISTER CAMPBELL CALLED THE NEW PLAN ANNOUNCED IN BEIRUT "A SENSIBLE FORMULA." FOR, AS HE SEES IT, A CEASE-FIRE WITHOUT ANY POLITICAL CONTENT WOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO CHANCE OF HOLDING. ANOTHER AMERICAN OBSERVER OF THE LEBANESE SCENE, PROFESSOR WILLIAM QUANDT OF PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY SEES THE NEW FORMULA DEPENDING LARGELY ON HOW SERIOUSLY SYRIA WORKS TO HAVE IT ACCEPTED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE LEBANESE SITUATION. HE PUT HIS VIEW THIS WAY:

VOICE:

I THINK IF THERE'S ANY PROSPECT FOR A CEASE-FIRE IT WILL DEPEND TO A LARGE DEGREE ON SYRIA'S WILLINGNESS TO PLAY

THAT KIND OF FUNDAMENTALLY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN ENCOURAGING MODERATION AND COMPROMISE. THE SYRIANS REALLY HOLD A LOT OF IMPORTANT CARDS IN THIS--THEY HAVE AN IMPORTANT DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE SITUATION, BECAUSE OF THEIR GEOGRAPHIC POSITION AND THEIR SUPPORT FOR VARIOUS PALESTINIAN GROUPS. AND ON BALANCE I THINK ONE CAN MAKE A STRONG CASE THAT IT IS IN SYRIA'S INTERESTS TO SEE THE FIGHTING IN LEBANON STOPPED.

NARR:

THE CONSENSUS AMONG THE THREE EXPERTS ON LEBANESE AND MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS WAS THAT WHILE CONSTRUCTIVE HELP SUCH AS THAT BEING RENDERED BY SYRIA IS DESIRABLE, ULTIMATELY A SOLUTION NOW DEVOLVES ENTIRELY ON THE LEBANESE PEOPLE THEMSELVES--MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS ALIKE.

-0-

GH/RTD